DOCTOR WILSON'S

SECOND

SERMON ON WITCHCRAFT,

DELIVERED IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

OF CINCINNATI, MARCH 8TH, 1846.

"I am set for the defence of the Gospel." . . . Paul.

CINCINNATI:

PRINTED AT THE BEN FRANKLIN PRINTING HOUSE, MAIN ST.

MDCCCXLVI.

133.4
W74.1

DOCTOR WILSON'S

SECOND

SERMON ON WITCHCRAFT,

DELIVERED IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

OF CINCINNATI, MARCH 8TH, 1846.

"I am set for the defence of the Gospel." . . . Paul.

CINCINNATI:

PRINTED AT THE BEN FRANKLIN PRINTING HOUSE, MAIN ST.

MDCCCXLVI.

133.4
W74.1

CARD
CATALOGUED

"To deny the possibility, nay actual existence, of Witchcraft and Sorcery, is at once flatly to contradict the revealed word of God in various passages both of the Old and New Testaments; and the thing itself is a truth to which every nation hath in its turn borne testimony, either by examples seemingly well attested, or by prohibitory laws, which at least suppose the possibility of a commerce with evil spirits."—BLACKSTONE'S COM. B. iv. Ch. 4, Sec. 6.

DOCTOR J. L. WILSON'S

SECOND

SERMON ON WITCHCRAFT.

MATT. XXIV: 24.—"*For there shall arise false Christs and false Prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch as, that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*"

HAVING before proved the reality of Witchcraft and given examples of its practical effects as an art, among Pagans, Infidels, and several sorts of nominal Christians; I shall now attempt to shew more fully, the operations of this art in the fulfilment of the prophecy expressed in our text. Our Lord has informed us that the exhibition of "great signs and wonders" by "false Christs and false Prophets" is made for purposes of deception; yea, a deception so plausible that none are secure from delusions, but "the very elect."

We may say that deception is Satan's master-piece, nor is this ever so complete as when he himself is "transformed into an angel of light." To propose some good to be accomplished by unlawful means—to coun-

terfeit God's appointments — and to bring to pass "great signs and wonders" to delude men for their ruin, are parts of his daily devices. How he seduced angels "to leave their own habitation" we know not; but of this we are certain, that by his deception, practised upon our first Mother, Eden was lost and all our race ruined. He began his deception on earth, by laying "Utility" at the foundation of moral obligation — by inculcating this rule of faith, "the end sanctifies the means" — and as a rule of practice, — "let us do evil that good may come." Thus he could make a plausible address to the senses, appetites, and desires of man. "See, the tree, the fruit of which is so unreasonably forbidden, is good for food, pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, and in the day ye eat thereof, instead of dying, ye shall be as Gods." It might seem as though the old Serpent would have been discouraged when God pronounced upon him such an awful sentence, that the heel of the woman's seed should bruise his head. — But, no, he only multiplied his deceptions, for the more effectual ruin of all mankind. For example; did God appoint the sacrifice of an innocent victim to typify the atonement which should be made by "the seed of the woman for the remission of sins?" — soon, Satan invented numerous false sacrifices, and induced men "to give the fruit of their bodies for the sin of their soul!" Did God raise up Prophets to declare his will and teach men the way of salvation? soon, Satan raised up diviners, soothsayers, magicians, and other workers of witchcraft, to lead men into abominable idolatries! Did God appoint a Priesthood to minister at his altar? Satan soon had numerous priests to serve at the altar of Baal! Did God speak to man

with audible voice? Satan's oracles soon spoke and gave responses to deluded inquirers! Did God make Urim and Thummim? and, did Moses put this piece of divine workmanship into the breast-plate of the High Priest where men might learn the will of the Lord? Soon, Satan invented Teraphim, and connected it with enchantments! So we read, Micah had a house of Gods, and made Teraphim. So the King of Babylon stood at the cross-ways to use divination--he consulted with Teraphim—he looked upon the liver! When God sent his Son into the world to save sinners—confirmed his divine mission and proved the truth of his doctrines "by miracles and wonders and signs," in the midst of the people; and when the Lord conferred upon his Apostles and others, the power of doing mighty works in the name of Jesus—very soon Satan raised up false Christs, false Prophets, and false Apostles, deceitful workers, "to shew great signs and wonders," to deceive many—Yea, to deceive, if possible, "the very elect."

Of these false Christs and false Prophets the Lord spake in our text, prophetically, saying, "Behold, I have told you before!"

The Greek words translated "*signs* and *wonders*" are the same elsewhere used to express the miracles of Christ, and the epithet, great, is prefixed to shew how astonishing the works of deceivers would be.

Has the prediction of our Lord been fulfilled? In the apostolic age many Anti-Christs arose, and, as false apostles, deceived many; but, we believe, no false Christ made his appearance till after the death of the Apostle John. From the early part of the second century to the middle of the seventeenth, there arose not

less than twenty-four false Christs. These set up their claims to be the Messiah, at different times, and in distant countries, where the Jews were dispersed.— Some of these impostors shewed *signs* and *wonders*, while others set up military ensigns in order to subvert the governments of their oppressors. They all, however, miserably perished with thousands of their deluded followers. While these false Christs were rising and falling, for the period of at least fifteen hundred years, and agitating in turns almost every part of the world, there arose in the christian church a most remarkable power, "whose coming was after the working of Satan, with signs and lying wonders." This is called "the mystery of iniquity," and there has been no power on earth to which Paul's description is applicable but the Popedom.

Every Pope claims to be the head of the Church; in Christ's stead, to dispense pardons, grant indulgences, and anathematize according to his will. To make him a false Christ or a false Prophet, such as our Lord foretold, it is not necessary for him to proclaim himself to be Christ, in his first or second appearing. What he had to do, and what he has done, was to declare himself to be in Christ's stead, possessing the authority and power of Christ, upon earth, claiming equal honor under the name of Supreme and Universal Bishop.

The Pope proclaims miracles as an evidence of the true Church; Christ proclaims them as an evidence of false teachers, so soon as the revelation and inspiration of God to man were finished. The Pope proclaims miracles to support his pretensions — the Prophet of Mecca disclaimed them as not needed in his cause;

therefore, the Pope, and not the Turk is "the man of Sin." The Papists testify to the reality of their miracles. Does this prove them to be the true Church? Nay, just the reverse, THE TRUTH, *Himself*, being witness. And, is it not a righteous retaliation for God to suffer miracles to be wrought to deceive those who have invented so many frauds to deceive others? The report of the miraculous cures performed by the robe exhibited in the Cathedral of Treves in the year 1844, is in point.

The history of the robe itself, is, in a great measure, from tradition, but the report of the miracles is made by Professor Marx, and approved by the Bishop of Treves. The cures are reported as matters of fact, attested by numerous, competent and credible witnesses. Out of many, I shall repeat but one: the miraculous cure of the Countess of Munster. This lady was suffering from a very painful contraction of the left leg. At Crentznach, she had taken the bath for two years, without benefit. On her arrival at Treves, she could not walk without crutches, nor move without pain. From the entrance of the church, she slowly proceeded to the robe, by the help of crutches, furnished with handles. She prayed, wept, touched the robe, stood upright, and withdrew, not needing her crutches, but supporting the arm of her grandmother. On the same day, she visited his lordship, the Bishop Arnoldi, and the next day, left the city, having deposited her crutches in the cathedral, as a testimony and memorial of her cure. Now, if the reality of this cure be denied, then we must give up the truth of human testimony. But our argument is this: Popish miracles are real, or they are pretended. If pretended, then Papists

are among the greatest deceivers on earth. If real, then the prediction of Christ is fulfilled, in Rome—in Treves, called by them, Cisalpine Rome. Here is a dilemma. Which horn will the Papists choose?

About the year 1688, a number of persons, called French Prophets, professed to be inspired by the Holy Ghost. They professed to have the gifts of healing, of speaking with tongues, of the discerning of spirits and of administration of the same spirit to others, by the laying on of hands.

The burden of their prophecy was, "Repent, ye, amend your lives, the end of all things draws nigh. The exterminating angels shall root out the tares, and there shall remain upon the earth only good corn." They uttered loud cries for mercy, and with imprecations against the Priests, the Church, the Pope, and against the anti-christian dominion, predicted the fall of Popery, declaring that in three years, the works of men being broken down, there should be but one Lord, one faith, one heart, and one voice among mankind. They were often in trances and said they saw heaven, angels, paradise and hell. About the year 1706 some of the French Prophets went over to England and propagated the like spirit to others, till, in a short time there were more than three hundred of them in and about London. These public excitements gradually passed, but some of the fruits still remained, till in 1747, a Society was formed in England, which, in process of time, led to the organization known by the name of Shakers. Ann Lee, the founder of this Society, in North America, was the last "false Christ" of whom we have any knowledge. She professed to be Christ in his second appearing, and her administration to be the beginning

of Christ's reign upon earth. The exercises of worship under her ministry consisted in singing and dancing, shaking and shouting, speaking with new tongues and prophesying. Her claims to be Christ are supported by numerous, attested miracles. I shall narrate only one out of many.

"Sarah Kibbee, of New-Lebanon," (in the State of New-York) testifieth—"That when a child she was very weakly—that her weakness finally settled in her left foot. That beside other medical attendance, she was under the care of Doctor Millard, during one whole summer, and found no relief. That her foot and leg withered, and seemed to perish;—that the chords of her ham were so contracted; that she was unable to straighten her leg, or set her foot to the floor. That for the space of a year and a half she used crutches altogether. That some time about the middle of March, 1781, being then in the sixteenth year of her age, she went with Noah Wheaton, from Hancock, where she then lived, to Neskeuna, (now Waler-Vliet) where Mother" (Ann Lee) "and the Elders resided."—(The Elders of the Shakers)—"That here she was left, though much against her will. That being a cripple and young and bashful, she was treated with great kindness and gentleness. That she had no faith in the testimony of the people," (called Shakers) "nor any convictions of sin, although her parents had believed before. That labors were made with her, and after a few days she received faith, and confessed her sins. That the next day, being the first day of the week, as she was sitting in a chair, Elder William Lee came into the room, took hold of her foot, and stroked it with his hands, saying, "According to thy faith, so

be it unto thee.' That soon after Mother came into the room, and bade her 'Put away her wooden staves, and lean upon Christ.' That she immediately received strength, laid away her crutches and hath never used any since, but was restored to perfect soundness, so that her foot and leg, which before was, at least, one quarter less than the other, was, in every respect, restored equal with the other; that she went forth in the worship of God," (the dance,) "afterwards to work, and hath never felt the least symptom of her old infirmity, from that day to this. Taken from the mouth of the said Sarah Kibbee, April 21, 1808. In the presence of Hannah Chauncy, Amos Stower, D. Goodrich, and S. Y. Wells (Signed) SARAH KIBBEE."

"Hannah Cogswell, of New Lebanon, testifieth, that the above mentioned Sarah Kibbee's miraculous cure was wrought in her presence. Noah Wheaton, also stateth, as a remarkable instance of obstinate unbelief and determined opposition, in the world of mankind, against the truth; that having often labored with two men, his neighbors, (by name Gideon and Simeon Martin) to convict them of the truth of the testimony, which he had received,—and that they knowing that the people professed faith in the gift of miracles, had said that, if the Shakers would cure Sarah Kibbee, they would believe in them; that, accordingly, after her miraculous cure, these men having seen her, he reminded them of their promise, as they must now be convinced that Sarah Kibbee was restored. That they replied, that if they should see the Shakers cut a man in two, and put him together again, and heal, him, they would not believe."

About thirty years before the public ministry of Ann Lee, as a false Christ, Emanuel Swedenborg arose as a false prophet. He professed constantly to see, and converse with spirits and angels—to explore invisible worlds—to restore to men the key of knowledge which had been lost for ages; and, after rejecting the essential doctrines of the gospel, he published the most singular system of religious opinions, compounded of Pagan Philosophy, some portions of Christianity and a large amount of Necromancy, that the world ever saw. He is said to be the founder of the New Jerusalem, spoken of in the Revelations of John, and resting his pretensions on new revelations, attempted to work no miracles. Swedenborg being deceived himself has had the art to deceive many; who are manifestly the children of this world—"lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."

The last delusion to which I shall turn your attention at present is Mesmerism. This is a modern name for what is considered an ancient science. Its advocates claim for it a very high antiquity. They say that it has been dimly known, for ages, in barbarous countries. That its high results were also known to *some* among the great nations of the earth—that the Bible itself furnishes many instances of men possessing great magnetic power; as Moses, Baalam, Elijah, and others in the old Testament; and Peter, Paul, and others in the New. The defeat of the Amalekites, when Moses held up his hands—the raising of the dead, when Elijah stretched himself upon the corpse—the sudden death of Ananias and Sapphira and the instant cures usually deemed miraculous are all to be ascribed to the power of this art.

The healing of the wound of Ulysses by incantation—the cure of hydrophobia by the word Abracadabra—the cure of the bites of serpents, by songs—and of diseases of the spine, by gentle pressure, are all to be ascribed to the same potent agency. To this mysterious power have been, also, ascribed the strange phenomena which were manifested among the devotees at the tomb of St. Paris, about a century ago—and about two centuries past, at Loudun, among the Ursuline Nuns. At the tomb of the Saint, whatever their diseases were, they were cured—and the Ursulines had a knowledge of languages they had never learned, could divine the unexpressed thoughts of others—had the gift of prophecy, and were insensible to pain.—According to Deluse, the persons who were cured of diseases at the tomb of St. Paris mesmerized one another without knowing it. And why might not the nuns at Loudun prophesy, speak with unknown tongues, and discern spirits by the same power when it is affirmed that "the clairvoyant is a pure animal, without any admixture of matter. His observations are those of a spirit. He is similar to God. His eye penetrates all the secrets of nature."

Some, who were called spiritualists, mesmerized by prayer; and having once affected a patient, the operator could afterwards produce in him clairvoyance in the highest degree, by his will, though they might be seperated hundreds of miles: and very remarkable cures were performed by them. In the annals of animal magnetism among the Germans, wonders were developed to as great an extent. The votaries were enabled to hold communion with disembodied spirits without any trouble.

French mesmerism could also dispense with manipu-

lations of every kind; the authoritative exercise of the will of the mesmerizer being sufficient to produce the phenomena, even without the knowledge of the patient. While the patient was in a state of mesmeric sleep, he was so insensible that a tooth might be extracted. without giving him pain, and his mind was possessed of clairvoyance, intuition and perception. The secrets of the past, of the present and of the future, are not concealed from the somnambulist. He can see the minute structure of his own body, examine the interior of the bodies of others who may be distant from him, provided he knows them, or provided any one placed in communication with him, thinks intently of the distant person.

Modern mesmerism, as a remedial agent, is said to cure various kinds of palsy, rheumatism, convulsions, madness, deafness, scrofula, white swelling, etc., etc.—

The operators, they say, can not only mesmerize men, but, all sorts of animals, vegetables, and things without life. Many books have been published on the mysteries of Mesmerism, by learned and distinguished men, and the press is still putting forth announcements of its great wonders. The high pretensions of this art have in some instances, been brought into discredit by mere pretenders; but in the hands of skilful practitioners, such great wonders have been shewn, that if it were possible "the very elect" would be deceived by them.

And, here three questions arise.

I. WHO ARE "THE VERY ELECT?"

II. WHY CAN THEY NOT BE DECEIVED? And,

III. HAS SATAN, BY THE ART OF WITCHCRAFT, ANY DISPOSITION OR POWER TO DO GOOD?

Let us answer these questions. And,

I. *Who are "the very elect?"*

I need not stop to define the term elect, in a place where so many elections occur; but, observe the emphasis of the text—"*very elect.*" Many are *elect* who are, nevertheless, deceived. Saul was elected to be king—Baalam was elected to be a prophet—Hophni, to be a priest, and Judas to be an Apostle, yet they were all deceived and miserably perished. But "*the very elect*" are persons, in every nation, whom "God hath, from the beginning, chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto they are called by the gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." "*The very elect* are a peculiar people zealous of good works,"—redeemed by the blood of Christ—"called and chosen and faithful."

II. *Why is it impossible for these chosen people to be deceived?*

We can offer several reasons why "the very elect" cannot be deceived. And,

1st. Because they have an infallible teacher. It is written in the prophets "They shall all be taught of God. Every one, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me," said Christ. Jehovah speaking to his Church, as an afflicted woman, said, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children."

2nd. "The very elect" cannot be deceived, because they have an infallible guide. Jesus says—"My sheep hear my voice and they follow me, a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers." "The good shepherd layeth down

his life for the sheep—he goeth before them, they follow him and shall never perish."

3rd. They cannot be deceived, because they have infallible tests by which to try the spirits. For example, "If there arise among you a prophet; and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto thee, saying, 'Let us go after other Gods—let us serve them,—thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God." If the signs and wonders of false prophets came to pass they were to be set aside on the ground of their connection with false religion. "Let us go after other Gods." It is not, then, the shewing of signs and wonders that is to sustain any man as a teacher worthy of confidence; but his shewing them in support of the true religion. The true prophets did not all work miracles, but they sustained the true religion. Of the greatest of all the prophets it is said, "John did no miracle, but all things that John spake of this man (Jesus) were true." Jesus Christ wrought miracles and appealed to them as a proof of his Messiahship. But his stronger appeal was to the true religion which he so clearly taught. He did not say, "if ye believe not the miracles"—but, if they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Had Jesus wrought no miracles, then, what had been written of Messiah would not have been fulfilled in him. If he had wrought miracles in favor of a false religion he would have been utterly unworthy of confidence. In either case he would have sunk as a false Christ.—A prophet is to be tried not by his signs and wonders,

however great, but by his doctrine. Paul said, "There be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ, but though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you let him be accursed."—And John said, "Whoever abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God"—"If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, (the doctrine of Christ) receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed."

But many have shewn great signs and wonders who do not pretend to teach any kind of religion. Of course, then, they teach infidelity. And the master whom they serve cares not whether they teach a false religion or no religion. If they can class the miracles of Moses and the Prophets, and Christ, and his Apostles, with the recorded miracles of pagans, and all, with their own Mesmeric phenomena, then the ruin of men by infidelity is as certain as if they had seduced them to a false religion. But "the very elect" cannot be deceived, because they are taught of God, follow Christ, and use an infallible test for the trial of those who "shew great signs and wonders." There are other reasons why they cannot be deceived, but these are sufficient. But, after all, we are asked, "Are these great signs and wonders real? Are they not fictitious, practiced by some slight of hand, or some collusive hypocrisy?" No doubt there has, in these things, been much priestcraft, collusion, imposture. But is a counterfeit dollar nothing? It may be worse than nothing, but, still, it is a counterfeit dollar—as much a reality, of its kind, as a true dollar. But this illustration may not be satisfactory. Well, then, say, God in the Old Testa-

ment, and Jesus Christ in the New, have asserted the reality. This ought to settle the question; and, especially when a reason is assigned for allowing the signs and wonders of false Prophets to come to pass—that God, thereby, may prove his own people. They are permitted as heresies are permitted, "that they who are approved may be made manifest" in the Church. Now, all these signs and wonders are wrought by witchcraft which is a work of the flesh, that is, a work of corrupt human nature, under the power of Satan, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

III. *Has Satan power or disposition to do good?*

No one can deny the personal existence and power of Satan without rejecting the truth of the Bible. He is called the Dragon, the old Serpent, the Devil, and Satan. In view of these several names given to one Being, let us ask, who beguiled Eve? Who disputed with Michael, the archangel, about the body of Moses? Who brought the Sabeans, and the Chaldeans, and a great fire from heaven, and a great wind from the wilderness, to destroy the property and children of Job? Who was it that smote Job with sore boils, from the sole of his foot to his crown? Who was it that stood at the right hand of Joshua, the High Priest, to resist him? By whom was Paul tormented with a thorn in the flesh? Who set the Son of God on a pinnacle of the Temple? Who took Him up into an exceeding high mountain, shewed Him all the kingdoms of the world and said, "All this power will I give thee and the glory of them, for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If thou, therefore, wilt worship me all shall be thine?" And, for whom

was "the everlasting fire" with which transgressors are threatened, originally prepared?

But those who admit the reality of Satan's personal existence, and acknowledge his great power—who allow that he can seduce and torment men and beasts, by divine permission, are ready to say, "when pain is removed, when a cripple is healed, when sickness is cured without any visible remedies—this cannot be the work of Satan, for, though he has great power to do evil, he has neither disposition nor power to do good. The magicians could mimic the miracles of Moses, in some things which were productive of evil, but those evils they could not remove, hence, such miracles as were of benefit to mankind have been most generally considered as a distinguishing confirmation of the Spirit of goodness and truth; and, upon this principle, the gift of healing hath been the most universally ascribed to the Spirit of Christ." This is plausible and would seem quite conclusive, if it were not that "Satan, himself, is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if "his ministers, also, be transformed as the ministers of righteousness." Is it not true that wicked men have often had extraordinary gifts; which have fed their pride, and from which offences have arisen against the true exercise of divine power? If miraculous cures must be always an evidence of the exercise of divine power, and a test of the true church of Christ, then, where is the true church? The Papists, the Shakers, the Mesmerites, all perform these cures. Which of them is the true Church?

The fact is, that such miracles are a proof of false apostles, "transforming themselves into the apostles of

Christ." And for what? To preach another gospel—to serve other Gods—to bring divine power into discredit, and confirm men in their unbelief. These are objects worthy of Satan, himself; and, he sometimes casts out devils, not to sap the foundation of his kingdom, but to fix it more firmly. Christ says, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity."

The casting out of devils might be, in itself, a good deed—but, when it was done to propagate false doctrine, it was a work of iniquity. When the damsel possessed with the spirit of divination, cried after Paul and his companions, saying, "these men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation;" she spoke the truth. But for what? To make it appear that Paul and a priestess of Apollo were in fellowship! This grieved the Apostle, and he commanded the spirit of divination to come out of her. Thus it is that Satan will do good or evil, tell truth or a lie, just as he thinks it will best promote his malignant purposes of destruction.

There are, however, some passages of scripture which seem to militate against what we have said.—For, example, the beloved disciple being jealous of the honor of his Lord, said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name and we forbade him because he followeth not us." But Jesus said, "forbid him not. for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall

give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily, I say unto you he shall not lose his reward." You will observe here, that wizards and witches who shew great wonders, never pretend that they work miracles in the name of Christ; and false prophets and false Christs have never spoken lightly of Jesus. The true meaning of this passage is finely illustrated in the book of Numbers. When Moses assembled the Elders of Israel around the tabernacle to receive the spirit of prophecy, two of them did not follow, but remained in the camp; and the spirit rested upon them and they prophesied in the camp; and Joshua, the son of Nun, said, "My Lord, Moses, forbid them." And Moses said, "enviest thou for my sake? Would God all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them." Paul understood this when he said, "no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed."

In the reply of Christ to John, he evidently spake of those that were with him; and if any have done great signs and wonders and at the same time spoken lightly of him, they did them not in his name.

Again, Nicodemus said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles, which thou doest, except God be with him." Many are of the same opinion still.—So great a man as Cruden has said, "A miracle is a supernatural operation performed alone by the power of God," and he refers to the opinion of Nicodemus in support of his definition, not considering, that this opinion is refuted, by Christ, himself, in the words of our text. It was not the time to correct the mistake in his first conversation with Nicodemus.

In the sequel of this discourse there is yet an important question to be settled. It may be said, "If miracles are so equivocal, if false prophets and false Christs shew great signs and wonders, how can the miracles recorded in the scriptures be adduced as an evidence of the true religion?" To this we reply, that the miracles recorded in the scriptures are of two classes. The first class comprehends such as were designed to prove the true religion. The second, such as being wrought in connection with the true religion, were intended to make converts and confirm believers.

The first class was so peculiar and wrought under such circumstances that no magician or false prophet has ever attempted to perform any thing of the kind; and the second sort, when performed by false Christs, have been connected with false religion. Examples of the first class are found, in the Deluge, in the destruction of Sodom, the dividing of the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud and fire, the water from the rock, manna from heaven—the feeding of thousands with a few loaves and fishes—the raising of Lazarus from the dead after a long interment—the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. These incontestibly prove, that God has revealed to man a system of true religion. The healing of diseases, the speaking in unknown tongues, the holding of intercourse with beings belonging to the invisible world, the looking into places at a distance belong to the second class, and are only to be ascribed to the power of God when connected with the system of true religion which God has sanctioned by the first class of miracles.

But miracles are not the only testimony in favor of true religion. The fulfilment of prophecy is strong and

clear. And we may say, that the gospel is its own witness, in its sublimity, simplicity, purity and power, to bless men by turning them from their iniquities. Many, blessed be God, have been turned from witchcraft by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, confessed their sins, burnt their books, and rejoiced in a free and full pardon. God grant that many more may be delivered from the power of Satan, and share in the liberty of the Sons of God.

And, now, brethren, look at the signs of these times. Let the clear fulfilment of our Lord's words give strength to your faith, and keenness to your vigilance.

The unclean spirits of devils, working miracles, have gone up out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet "unto the kings of the earth and to the whole world to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty." "Behold," saith the Lord, "I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments lest he walk naked and they see his shame. Even so come Lord Jesus."